

many from getting the help they need. Nearly 90 percent of Americans suffering from opioid addiction, according to the most current analyses, are not receiving the treatment they need—90 percent. The treatment gap is caused by a shortage of available treatment services across the country, and even where these services do exist, they are overwhelmed by demand. This gap is straining rural communities that are already struggling to provide other essential medical services. Asking these communities to provide care when they are stretched in such incredibly thin ways forces them into impossible choices. The result is even more lives in America are lost to opioid addiction.

Earlier this year, after Congress passed legislation called CARA authorizing anti-addiction programs, Members did an awful lot of celebrating, an awful lot of victory laps, and fired off a forest of press releases, but that act didn't put a penny into these essential treatment programs. I just wanted to come to the floor because we are looking at another crucial time to help those suffering from addiction. The press releases don't do anything for people suffering from these horrible illnesses who might turn next to heroin, and when nearly 9 out of 10 addicted to opioids aren't getting treatment, clearly there is much more that needs to be done so it is critical in this lameduck session to follow through with funding.

I have been encouraged by several of the conversations that have taken place over the last few days about finding a path forward to ensuring there be real funds for treating opioid addiction, but I have seen some of these debates before, and I have been encouraged before only to see the chance for progress stall out. I would like to note that I believe there is a special reason right now to stand up for patients and make sure they have access to treatment, that they have what they need.

In the next few weeks, the Congress is going to consider another piece of legislation called the 21st Century Cures Act. This will be a bill designed to encourage research and scientific development of new pharmaceuticals, fast-tracking the development of pharmaceuticals.

I don't take a backseat to anyone when it comes to supporting innovation and scientific research. In fact, early in my Senate days, I chaired the Senate's Science Subcommittee so I know how important it is. At the same time, this piece of legislation will also offer a great benefit to the large pharmaceutical companies in America. The Congress will be considering the Cures bill with the backdrop of so many who are addicted to opioids not being able to get access to treatment, and they are going to be concerned about how there will be more research for new drugs because we want to see these cures. They are going to ask: How are we going to afford them? We want the cures, but we also want to be able to afford these medicines.

Every time we look at a football game, we see dozens of ads for blockbuster drugs, but Americans watch those ads and say: Yes, we want those cures, yes, we want the scientific progress, but please, Congress, think about policies that are going to allow us to get those drugs. It is no wonder a recent editorial pointed out it was cheaper to fly round trip to India for a hepatitis C treatment than to get it here in the United States. People see these bills piling up. If they are able to afford their medications today, they are saying: Are we going to lose access tomorrow?

To me, here is the bottom line for the fall. Here is the bottom line for where we ought to go. Yes, we should support medical breakthroughs and research into cures, but let us not keep the patients out of the debate. Let us make sure we add the funds needed for treatment for those who are addicted to opioids, and as we look at this issue of cures, let us also look at policies to make sure people can afford their medicines.

The Committee on Finance has been looking at these issues. For example, recently, I raised a serious objection when I learned a panel meant to be studying how to turn the tide on opioid addiction was stocked with people closely tied to opioid manufacturers. We blew the whistle on that and four nominees to the panel were dismissed.

We have a lot to do this fall. I know time is short, but, yes, let us promote these new cures; yes, let us make sure people who are addicted to opioids have new opportunities for treatment; and as we look at drug development, let us make sure we don't see so many Americans on the outside looking in as prices go up and up and up. There is more work to be done on both fronts: ensuring access to new science, ensuring access to treatment services, ensuring access to affordable medicines. That is what we ought to be focusing on this fall.

With that, I yield the floor.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### GOLD STAR FAMILIES VOICES ACT

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I ask that the Gold Star Families Voices Act be reported.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Committee on Rules and Administration is discharged from and the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 4511, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4511) to amend the Veterans' Oral History Project Act to allow the collection of video and audio recordings of biographical histories by immediate family members of members of the Armed Forces

who died as a result of their service during a period of war.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 30 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Missouri.

#### OPIOID ABUSE

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I am pleased to be here to talk about this bill. First of all, following up on what my friend just talked about on opioid abuse, I want to particularly thank the Chair for her leadership on this issue. Really, as the chairman of the appropriating committee that looked at this before we had any legislation, it was largely the Chair's effort that made us triple the amount of money we were committing to this cause over a year ago. I thank her for understanding this and advocating for it as one of the two or three earliest Members to bring to the attention of the Senate that this is a problem that affects rural America, urban America, small States, and big States. I thank her for her leadership.

Because of that, last year we had a 284-percent increase in the money committed to that. We doubled that amount again this year. Assuming we are able to move forward with the Labor, Health and Human Services bill this year, it will be virtually a 600-percent increase. We are already halfway there, and that first half was largely because of the Presiding Officer's understanding of this issue, and I am grateful for that.

Madam President, on the bill before the body today, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting the Gold Star Families Voices Act. The legislation passed the House unanimously in September. I hope the Senate will do the same today.

In 2000, Congress created the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. That project was designed to collect and catalog the stories of American war veterans. The purpose of the project was "to preserve the memories of this Nation's war veterans so that Americans of all current and future generations may hear directly from veterans and better appreciate the realities of war and the sacrifices made by those who served in uniform during wartime."

To date, the Veterans History Project has collected the oral history records of over 100,000 veterans who have served in the military since World War I—100,000 stories preserved that wouldn't have been otherwise.

As important and extensive as that project is, as important as those 100,000 memories are, today the project only includes firsthand narratives. Now, what does that mean? That means that only people who are telling their own story are included in the stories we have created and have been able to secure because of the Veterans History Project, which effectively excludes the stories of veterans who didn't return from the battlefield—the men and women who lost their lives defending

this country. This legislation would ensure the stories of veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice would now be included in the archives.

How would this work? This bill would allow the family members of veterans who are missing in action or who have died as a result of their service to participate in the project and tell the stories of their loved ones. Immediate family members who can participate include parents, spouses, siblings, and children of veterans who were not able to tell their own story. We wouldn't be who we are today if it wasn't for the acts of courage and selflessness of our fallen heroes. We owe it to them, but we also owe it to their families to know of their names, their deeds, the honorable service they gave the country, and we need to preserve those memories. The families of these fallen heroes are in the best position to share their stories so future generations of Americans may never forget the people we owe our freedom to and have not been able to have their story told up until now. I think this legislation will make a great program even better and hope my colleagues will agree.

I thank the American Gold Star mothers for fighting to make this bill a priority. I thank Congressman CHRIS SMITH, who introduced this legislation in the House and who has been its ultimate champion. I was happy to be able to lead this bill through the Rules Committee.

I urge all my colleagues to join me today in helping to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice and make sure their stories and those of their loved ones become part of this historic record.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I rise to bring up two key priorities—two important unmet needs—which I hope this body and the U.S. House will act on immediately and certainly by the end of the year.

The first is the Steve Gleason Act, legislation I drafted which passed last year but for a limited period of time. We need to make that permanent for reasons I will explain.

The second even broader need is to ensure that victims of the recent flooding in Louisiana—many families whose lives were devastated in incalculable terms—get the aid they need. We made an important downpayment on that before we wrapped up business before the elections, with the understanding that we would clearly revisit the issue between now and the end of the year.

Madam President, first, the Steve Gleason Act. As I said, I am very happy that last year the Senate and the House passed my legislation, the bipartisan Steve Gleason Act of 2015. It provided immediate relief to ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease, and other similar patients who needed the help to make sure they had access to important, life-changing medical equipment.

I first heard about this need in 2014, when thousands of patients, patient advocates, and others came to Congress in order to bring attention to the devastating consequences of what was then a brandnew Medicare policy. The devices they were concerned with are critical for patients who have lost their ability to speak, to communicate with friends and family and doctors, to call 911 in case of emergency, ALS patients and others with similar debilitating diseases. These patients are locked in, unable to communicate, and it is only because of miraculous, relatively new devices that they can communicate with caregivers and the outside world. In most cases, this involves their using a computer screen and keypad, where they literally make eye contact with the keyboard on a computer screen, type out a message, and then the computer through a computer voice articulates that message to caregivers, family, doctors, and the outside world.

Because of a Medicare change—an unprovoked, unnecessary change in Medicare policy—many of these patients were denied access to these life-changing devices. The devices were literally confiscated in thousands of cases. They were not allowed to use this technological miracle to make them more fully independent.

Thank goodness, entered Steve Gleason, a superadvocate for the ALS community, an ALS patient himself. Steve is a former player for the New Orleans Saints. He famously blocked a punt during the first game in which the Saints reopened the Superdome after Hurricane Katrina; then, a few years after that, he was diagnosed with ALS himself.

Just as he gave the city of New Orleans a rallying point around which to rebuild after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, through his organization Team Gleason, Steve also gives the ALS community and their families hope and a rallying point with his motto: "No White Flags."

I believe Steve's wife Michel summed up the cause of ALS patients like Steve and their loved ones succinctly when she said:

What causes me the most pain is the loss of his voice, I love hearing his voice. I want him to talk to me, and to our son Rivers. This disease takes his body; to take his voice just seems unfair.

Of course, this is where this life-changing device and this similar medical equipment helps plug the gap. This is why the horrible reversal in Medicare policy caused so many problems.

Steve and I worked together on legislation that would reverse that policy change and would give folks with ALS their voices back. Steve was my guest at the State of the Union speech in 2015. That day, we met with Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burwell and were able to build major momentum, resulting in Members on both sides of the aisle and both houses of Congress coming together and eventually passing my Steve Gleason Act of

2015, which became law on July 30 of last year. Senator KLOBUCHAR from Minnesota and Senator KING from Maine were especially supportive and aggressive in getting this bill to the finish line, and I thank them again for their partnership and their support.

The act reinstated the longstanding Medicare policy to offer immediate relief for patients experiencing incredible difficulty accessing the important life-changing equipment I described. The Steve Gleason Act of 2015 was a huge win for thousands of ALS patients, their families, caregivers, and others, but we need to make this act permanent. It is of limited duration as it was passed last year. We need to make it permanent. It is as simple as that. We need to do it between now and the end of the year.

So I encourage all of my colleagues to come together, as we did last year, to take this commonsense step to empower these patients to be in touch with the outside world and their family and their caregivers—literally give them voice, literally empower them, as Steve has inspired and empowered so many others with ALS.

#### FUNDING FOR LOUISIANA FLOOD VICTIMS

Madam President, I also rise to talk about another key unmet need that is even of broader scope. As I said a few minutes ago, that is the urgent need between now and the end of the year to pass emergency help for the recent flood victims of Louisiana who were devastated by the consequences of that enormous flood.

Unfortunately, because there were lots of other things in the news at the time when that flooding happened in Greater Baton Rouge and Acadiana, a lot of Members and folks around the Nation don't fully appreciate and understand the gravity of that flooding. It was way underreported in the national media. It was way underappreciated and not fully understood by us in the Congress. We have solved some of that in the months since then, but still, to this day, so many Americans don't understand the gravity of that flooding.

The flooding I am describing a few months ago in Greater Baton Rouge and Acadiana in Louisiana is the fourth worst natural disaster we have experienced in a decade or more, only behind Hurricane Katrina, Superstorm Sandy, and Hurricane Ike—the fourth worst natural disaster by any reasonable metric, such as FEMA individual assistance. Louisiana had over 114,000 homes—114,000 homes—with a verified loss. Let's do a comparison to understand the scope of that.

In 2016, Missouri had horrendous flooding, very serious flooding, and I certainly supported an appropriate response there. That was about 2,500 individual registrations. South Carolina had even greater flooding in 2015. That was 26,000 individual registrations. Northern and Central Louisiana in March of this year had major flooding. That was 40,000 individual registrations. We are talking 114,000 homes

with verified loss. That is comparable to the loss in New York State from Superstorm Sandy. In Superstorm Sandy, there were 124,000 homes with verified loss in New York—about the same number. Again, we are talking about 114,000 homes in Louisiana. Now, that was not all of Superstorm Sandy, just New York. I am not counting New Jersey. That was another significant number, but that gives us a sense of the magnitude we are talking about.

I thank all of our colleagues and our colleagues in the House and President Obama for proposing the beginning of an appropriate response. Before we broke for the elections, we did pass significant emergency funding to go beyond the normal help in the Stafford Act and other statutes that pertain to FEMA and related agencies. About \$400 million was sent to the flood victims in Louisiana, but by any metric, that can only be the beginning. In fact, President Obama at the time and Congressional leaders at the time pledged that this would be the beginning and that we would come back now and, between now and the end of the year, finish an appropriate response.

I mentioned losses in New York caused by Superstorm Sandy. It was just a little more losses on homes flooded than we are talking about in Louisiana, and yet New York received \$8.6 billion related to that in emergency CDBG funds. We are not asking for near that amount, but that gives you a sense of the magnitude of the need. Certainly, the request the Governor and others—including myself and Senator CASSIDY—have put forward is fully justified by the numbers, by the metrics.

I would simply ask all of our colleagues in the Senate and all of our colleagues in the House to do the right thing—to look at the facts, to look at the figures, to look at the numbers, and to make the appropriate response, as we have in every other previous disaster, as we did in the lesser flooding in South Carolina, as we did in Missouri, as we did, certainly, with Superstorm Sandy, with Ike, Katrina, and Rita, et cetera—no special treatment. Just look at the numbers and look at the metrics. Do the right thing.

Our request from Louisiana is fully in line with that and fully justified by that precedent. It is a serious natural disaster. It was woefully under-reported. So it is important that we all learn more about it, focus on it, understand the magnitude of the loss, and ensure that we respond properly and adequately before the end of the year.

I look forward to continuing to work with all of my colleagues, starting with Senator CASSIDY, to do just that.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS).

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 152 Leg.]

YEAS—97

Alexander	Flake	Murray
Ayotte	Franken	Nelson
Baldwin	Gardner	Paul
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Peters
Bennet	Graham	Portman
Blumenthal	Grassley	Reed
Blunt	Hatch	Reid
Booker	Heinrich	Risch
Boozman	Heitkamp	Roberts
Boxer	Heller	Rounds
Brown	Hirono	Rubio
Burr	Hoeven	Sanders
Cantwell	Inhofe	Sasse
Capito	Isakson	Schatz
Cardin	Johnson	Schumer
Carper	Kaine	Scott
Casey	King	Shaheen
Cassidy	Kirk	Shelby
Coats	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cochran	Lankford	Sullivan
Collins	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Lee	Thune
Corker	Manchin	Tillis
Cornyn	Markey	Toomey
Cotton	McCain	Udall
Crapo	McCaskill	Vitter
Daines	McConnell	Warner
Donnelly	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Enzi	Mikulski	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Wyden
Feinstein	Murkowski	
Fischer	Murphy	

NOT VOTING—3

Cruz	Perdue	Sessions
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The bill (H.R. 4511) was passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The Senator from South Dakota.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### THE ELECTION AND REPUBLICAN PRIORITIES

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, there is no doubt that the election we have just been through was a bad one. Emotions ran high on both sides and are still running. But this is hardly the first time it has happened in our history, and it won't be the last.

Take the election of 1800, for example. The campaign between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson was no picnic either. It was emotional, hard fought, and full of partisan attacks. Each side alleged that the other would bring about ruin to our young Nation.

In his novel address, the new President, Thomas Jefferson, specifically referenced the contentious process that the Nation had just gone through, but then he said the following: “[B]ut this [meaning the election] being now decided by the voice of the nation, announced according to the rules of the Constitution, all will, of course, arrange themselves under the will of the law, and unite in common efforts for the common good.”

Let me repeat that: “all will . . . arrange themselves under the will of the law, and unite in common efforts for the common good.”

That is the key. That is what separates our Nation from tyrannies and other oppressive forms of government. In the United States, we may have contentious elections. But at the end of the day, we accept the results, and we move forward for the common good. That doesn't mean we give up fighting for what we believe in, of course, but we fight within the law, not outside of it.

Our form of government endures because as a nation we respect the rule of law. But there is another thing to remember about elections—not just the obligation that we have to accept the results and move forward, but something else, and that is what President Obama reminded us of the day after the election: We are all Americans, and at the end of the day, we are all on the same side.

Everyone is sad when their side loses an election, but the day after, we have to remember that we're actually all on one team. This is an intramural scrimmage. We're not Democrats first. We're not Republicans first. We are Americans first. We are patriots first.

That is from President Obama the day after the election. Indeed, we are Americans who believe in God-given freedoms, and what unites us is greater than what divides us. In the coming days, I look forward to working with my fellow Americans from both parties to meet the challenges that are facing our Nation.

There is one thing that this election made clear: It is that this economy is not working for American families. In one CNN exit poll last Tuesday, 63 percent of voters rated the economy as poor. That result should not surprise anyone. The last few years have been tough for American workers. Job creation has been sluggish. Wages have been stagnant. Economic growth has lagged far behind the pace of other recoveries, and opportunities for workers have been few and far between.

There is no wonder so many hard-working Americans feel that they have been left behind. To the millions of American workers who are discouraged by this economy I want to say this: We